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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1492
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INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
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SIPDIS

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD
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NSC FOR ABRAMS
CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (5/13): BUSH WILL FIND THE REGION
IN "DESTRUCTIVE CAOS"

Main Stories:

Talks between Omar Sulayman, head of Egyptian intelligence, and Israeli Defense Minister Barak win extensive front page coverage in all dailies. According to the coverage, Sulayman expressed, "high expectations" for the conclusion of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In related news, WAFA news agency reports that chief PLO negotiator Sa'eb Erekat urged Israel's government to cooperate with Egypt on achieving calm in the Gaza Strip. Erekat also called on Palestinian factions to cooperate with Egypt, explaining that Egyptian mediation comes at the request of Palestinian President Abbas, WAFA continues. Meanwhile senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahhar and Islamic Jihad leader Muhammad Al-Hindi, assert that the Palestinian people have the right to defend themselves should Israel reject a ceasefire, Ma'an reports. On the ground, the dailies front page reports that a Palestinian was killed on May 12 by the Israeli military and a 70-year old Israeli woman was killed by a homemade shell launched from Gaza on May 12.

Palestinian President Abbas met with Quartet Envoy Tony Blair to discuss arrangements for the upcoming investment conference in Bethlehem, the dailies announce. Related stories report that the Palestinian government has approved emergency projects at a cost of \$16.5 million to assist "Jerusalemmites."

Ma'an carries an exclusive report about eleven Palestinian leaders, mainly businessmen, having lunch with the Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilnai on May 12, in Tel Aviv. The businessmen were originally invited to meet with Israeli Defense Minister Barak following a meeting they had with the Israeli economic coordinator at his West Bank Bet El liaison office near Ramallah. The meeting focused on a plan for an industrial zone in the West Bank between

the cities of Nablus and Ramallah.

Jerusalem area settlement expansion is again in the news: Front pages report on an Israeli plan to build 150 new housing units in Gilo, in the southern part of Jerusalem. According to Al-Quds's front page, future plans for Gilo include construction of 10,000 new houses.

Reporting on the Lebanon crisis continues on front pages. Reporting remains factual, focusing on an uneasy calm that has settled over Lebanon.

BLOCK QUOTES:

¶1. Independent Al-Quds carries an op-ed by Tayseer Khaled, member of the PLO Executive Committee and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine entitled, "The commemoration of the catastrophe is the wrong time to visit" (5/13): "President Bush is on his way to the region, which is experiencing [historically] unstable days. The President might look around; if he does he will find right before his eyes, the reasons for the region's constructive chaos, which ultimately, has resulted in a destructive chaos and has caused huge fires that are out of control... the guest President will not feel the shock of the Palestinian reality nor be affected by the circumstances of the siege under which the people of Gaza are living... the President is on his way to the region and he realizes that the situation is extremely dangerous and that the consequences for world security and stability are tremendous... Bush

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has nothing to offer, even for the peace process that was launched in Annapolis..."

¶2. Independent Al-Ayyam carries an op-ed by veteran columnist Muhanned Abdulmajed entitled, "Hezbollah: a regional coup" (5/13): "Since the moment that Israel stopped launching rockets after the summer war of 2006, many observers predicted that the outcome of the war would leave its mark on Lebanon's internal matters... what is happening in Lebanon symbolizes an extreme scenario of the future for the whole Middle East... at this time, the Arab community is unable to end internal Lebanese conflict through an agreement. Therefore, it is more likely that the situation will continue to deteriorate...until international forces can interfere and resolve it... "

WALLES